Low Rates of ISD Calls by Foreign Companies

2667. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that foreign Telecom Companies like "Sprint", ATT and others are offering very attractive and low rates for ISD and foreign destination calls;

(b) what are the problems Indian Telecom face to offer concessional rates for overseas direct dialling calls;

(c) whether such concessional rates would ensure greater utilisation of the telecom equipment; and

(d) the steps proposed to be taken to provide concessional ISD calls?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) The question of tariff for ISD calls is dependent upon a number of factors like difference in timings, cross subsidy to rural areas and revenue sharing with other countries etc. and is therefore, examined by the Government periodically.

Coin Operated Phones

2668. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have formulated a policy to allow private companies to operate and maintain coin operated phones;

(b) whether it is a fact that most of these phones are not working;

(c) if so, how will Government sort the problem of inefficient maintenance;

(d) whether it is a fact that a good percentage of them need repairs; and

(e) if so, the steps Government propose to take to improve this facility?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) Earlier Bulk franchising of payphones by private companies was permitted until 14.8.92. This policy has since been withdrawn. However, payphone earlier franchised on bulk basis have been allowed to operate on existing terms and conditions.

(b) No, sir. The payphones which are not working are the ones disconnected for non-payment of Government dues.

(c) to (e) Does not arise.

Cellular Phone Service

2669. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) by when the cellular phones are being introduced in the four metros in view of the recent judgement of the Supreme Court; and

(b) whether Government are considering introduction of cellular phones simultaneously in other major cities like Bangalore and Madras?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) The judgement delivered by the Supreme Court is under examination. As per the terms of the tender, the service has to start within one year of signing the licence agreement.

(b) Madras has already been covered in the tender for four metros. Bangalore will be covered with the rest of the country in second phase.

New Telecom Policy

2670. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether government are taking a fresh view on the foreign equity ceiling in new joint ventures in the value-added telecom services like radio paging, cellular and Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) based services;